

Do you Remember?

HARRISON



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DO YOU REMEMBER?

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"Whose Fault?"

"Poems of Life and Light"

"A Fisherman's Daughter"

"Choir Boys of Cheswick"

"Girls of St. Andrews," Etc.



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FOREWORD.

I promised the Englishman long ago, that I would write about those glad old days, when youth and happiness went hand in hand. And presently, he will come in, and shaking his shapely head, will say: "Ah, you have not written it yet!" thinking perhaps, "You are not brave enough! It hurts you to think of those good days!"

Very likely.

But you know how it is, in looking at an oil painting, a portrait. You must stand away at just the right distance, or your picture is blurred and indistinct.

So I—I could not write of those dear days when they were too near. I must needs wait until I had left them so far behind, that all would stand out clear and unblemished; not a blur, not a blot, to mar the fair picture. I think now that I am old enough to see that picture fairly—without envy or jealousy—without partiality, and without injustice.

As I stand before it, to-day it seems a very bright

canvass. It smiles at me with the eyes and the lips of many a cherished friend. And there are only just shadows enough to emphasize the glowing sunlight. All defects are hidden away; all delinquencies are covered with a mantle of tenderness.

And so, my comrades, I show you those old days—those dear, foolish, happy days. Let us look at each other, you and I, just as we were, in youth's gala dress, the sunlight in our faces and the joy in our hearts.

Do You Remember?

I.

Did the sun *always* shine? Yes, I think so. Was it always soft Summer-time, in the old Home? I think so. We all thought so.

The gleam and the warmth seemed to settle upon each one of us, as the days dawned, and the birds began their songs.

The robins! how they sang! It seemed as if they knew all about it! "AND THE EVENING WAS, AND THE MORNING WAS"—both so glad, so full of joy and hope.

Oh, those nights! Did the moon ever hide her happy face? Not from us, indeed! We stood, always in the soft shimmer; and *darkness* had no meaning for us.

"In night's still calm," sang our tenor, with his voice thrilling all hearts.

"In night's still calm,
When sleep's soft balm
Is wooing thee to sweet repose."

How deeply sympathetic his voice was, with its clear, metallic ring! And how the chords on the piano resounded, through the long room, at the Big Boy's touch!

What a boy, truly, he was!

It is good to keep the boy heart, as one goes on through life's scorching sands, and one's feet ache and

grow weary with the roughness of the way. *He* has kept his boy heart always: even now, when (can it be?) he has as big a boy himself who says "father" to him!

Oh, Time! relentless Time! how you tear our hearts with your changes! Nothing against *you*, Big Boy Number Two, that we did not have you, in those dear old days! It is old Father Time—*not you*, at whom we are railing.

* * * * * * * *

How he did finger those keys! our Boy! Occasionally he would coax the Little Housekeeper to play a "four-hand" with him—on purpose, I used to think, to frighten her with his "*Allegro! allegro!*"

How she raced, to keep in time with him! and how alarmed she used to look, lest she should come out a half-beat behind!

Were they all laughing at her? Perhaps. But they knew she would not mind.

It is so good, to know those in whom we have believed! And, dear friends, there is no irreverence in the expression. I say it with a reverent and thankful heart—we knew in whom we believed, in those old, glad days! It was half the joy of living.

Do we find the world so true, in these later times? Ah, well! we have had our day!

We had our weaknesses: oh, yes!

"I have a little headache. If you will excuse me, I will go to my room."

We heard our Sweet Singer say it to The Little Housekeeper, on occasions when "the game was not to" *him*.

And then, "in night's still calm," he slept away his disappointment, while we smiled indulgently. Was he not

our Sweet Singer? And always he was "all right in the morning."

He would pause midway on the stairs, to look back and say, "I shall be all right in the morning!"

And he *was*. He never failed us.

II.

How much it meant to us, in those days—the winning or the losing of a game!

But the game was not just a “*game*,” with “balls” and “mallets” and “stakes,” and fine points to be made! It was the sweet out-of-doors, the lights and shadows, the soft grass, the bird-calls, the companionship and the pleasant little by-play of words and looks, which in youth means so much!

How character used to show itself on that grassy field!

I can see the faces, and hear the voices yet! the laughing mien and careless shout of our Big Boy; the calm smile and correct diction of our Champion Player; the nervous stroke of our Little Housekeeper; the proud announcement—“That is *my* partner, ladies!” of “C. B. H.,” when the Sweet-tempered One made a particularly effective move!

Dear C. B. H. He has left us, for the Better Land. And we miss his cheery voice and his ready help. He was always eager to do something for somebody. He *did* a great deal for many people: we shall not know how much, until we stand before our Master, and hear it said unto our friend: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Often, in those old days of plays and games, there was a croquet ball lacking some hand to use it, to make an even “team.” Our Wise One named this ball “*Mary Ann*,” and C. B. H. used to play it in turn with his own ball; playing prettily, at the same time, with the plain

name, which by and by we learned to know stood for so much to him.

Yes, he won his "Mary Ann"; and they had many happy wedded years together.

* * * * *

Who is this that I see coming out through the woods toward the players?

I am back in the old days! and it is the Young Clergyman—*our* Young Clergyman!

He has left the little church among the trees; and is smiling at us indulgently.

Oh, yes! he will "take a hand," and play it well, too!

We like to have him. He is a trifle romantic to be sure! but some of us can bear that! And he looks at the Easy-going One as if perchance she may lack a partner.

It is not a Church day—no. But our Young Clergyman likes to come home by that little path which winds through the sweet, still woods, and under the low church windows.

Perhaps there will be a "choir practice" to-night; and he has been leaving some word for the faithful, who help him in the Services.

They *are* faithful. They give of their best; and ~~he~~ accepts it, thankfully.

* * * * *

"*Are*," did I say? Why, I am dreaming of the old days!—dreaming! and I awake, to remember that some of those voices are silent now to us. But "beyond the River" they know never a false note! not a discord, nor an envious thought!

There are no "First" and "Second" sopranos there!

How the dear "First." with her bright face, comes before me as I write! She *knew* she sang well. Verily, so did our sweet "Second"! And we, who listened, loved them both so well, we could not chose between!

The Leader—whose very soul was set to music—was ever a peace-maker, putting in his "bit of bass," as he called it, like a sweet thread, to harmonize all.

All that was good in us came out at his magic touch.

Dear Leader! what joy he finds, now, in the "New Song" of that Better Land!

* * * * *

What has become of our game? and of our young clergyman?

For the latter, he is boasting to the Sweet-tempered One of how they two have won the game—or would have done so, had not the supper bell summoned us all to leave the sunset light and the witchery of balls and mallets!

There are some of us, however, who remember well how that same supper bell was often heard with serene scorn, because of the intense interest and excitement of the game, which being so "close," none dared to say who might win: or because perchance three or four heads are bending together over a certain ball and wicket, and somebody, who carries them in his vest pocket, is striking matches, to give light on the all-important subject under discussion—whether that ball really *is* through the wicket or not!

Ah! how foolish it all seems, as we look back upon it, through the years which have made us wise!

Wise, did I say? Ah, God help us! but the dear old foolishness seems better to us than all the wisdom we have so hardly gained!

III.

"Monday is always a holiday," remarked our Young Clergyman, peering along the dim parlor, to see who was there.

"Let us play to-day," he added coaxingly, as he discovered the Easy-going One in a cozy corner.

"What shall we play?" asked the Little Housekeeper, with a careful thought of meals to be served.

What did we decide upon? Who remembers?

For, after all, the talking it over, with the merry jests and suggestions, was almost, if not quite as good, as any real performance.

Perhaps it was a long ride, through shady roads and along the sun-kissed river.

Can you close your eyes, and see that river, my friends of long ago?

How it used to sparkle and dance! modest little river, that carried so often happy hearts upon its bosom!

Did we ever know a fear, we reckless, laughing creatures? Were not all things made for our enjoyment?

* * * * *

She handled the oars very deftly, that Thoughtful One, whose pretty arms and hands were at the service of "the girls," whenever they chose to be independent of the male members at The Home.

Did not the Little Housekeeper whisper to me, once, with tears in her eyes, that she had been frightened, on one occasion, by the waves of a passing steamer, when

the Thoughtful One was rowing, and foolishly screamed, putting her hands over her eyes.

"And then," said she, "I looked up at the dear Thoughtful One's face, and—well, somehow I shall never forget the look upon that face! I knew then how truly she loved me!"

It was rather romantic of the Little Housekeeper, possibly a little silly. She was always inclined to be romantic. Perhaps that is why she always had a good word for the Young Churchman. How many such words I have heard her speak of which he did not know! She had plenty of kindly ones face to face with him, also. And yet—and yet—his preference was always for our Sweet-tempered One!

Who can blame him?

But she was very shy and distant and dignified.

Did not she remember one long, delightful day, spent in gazing at famous pictures, in company with the Young Theolog?

And what were ordinary days, after that?—and who were ordinary Young Churchmen?

"A Red Letter day—with a Red Letter Saint!" some one wickedly suggests.

Poor Young Churchman—standing calmly in his six-foot hopefulness—and suspecting nothing!

* * * * *

Dear, honored Young Theolog!—you have gone far from us, since those old, care-free days!

Why did you?

We miss you so! And were not the "old paths" good enough, secure enough for you, as for us?

Dear erratic one! our hearts are sad for it all. We feel that vacant spot where you *should be*! That pulpit, that prayer desk, seem forever needing *just you*!

Forgive me! I know, we all know, that you are *honest*, that you are led by your clear convictions. But, oh! it does not seem like you!

Perhaps we may understand it all, in That Day when "all hearts are known."

* * * * * * *

Erratic as our Young Theolog has come to be, we cannot forget him.

Even now, when she is old, one among us can still recall his fine, clear tones, as he demonstrated the poetical beauty of

"And the reapers, reaping early,
In among the bearded barley."

And she remembers how, with deferential politeness, he questioned our Little Housekeeper's accentuation, as she rendered Shelley's "Arethusa":

"Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains."

That "Acroceraunian" was the word in question!

Ah, well! At least, in the kindly heart and in the courtly manner of our Young Theolog, there was not a trace of "error"! No keenest hierarchy of earth can find a flaw *there*! Neither Bishop, Priest, nor Deacon can lay a finger upon any false spot. No deepest probing can find anything that is not crystal pure in loyalty, honor and courtesy!

But, oh, friend of our youth, we miss you from the ranks!

IV.

We loved that river!

If I should tell you its name—its plain, every-day name, as it appears on the pages of your Geography—you would smile scornfully.

But then, you do not know—you who did not belong among us—what *we* knew of that little stream!

Its ripples spoke rest and romance and fun to us. They told of long, idle, dreamy hours; of song and story; of pleasant pastime and of merry jest.

There was no lack of ready hands to take the oars.

“C. B. H.” and “Frank,” his brother; the Englishman, and even the Young Churchman himself, all enjoyed it. But I think not one of them better than our Thoughtful One!

I always loved to watch her row. She was so calm, so graceful in handling the oars; so fearless for herself, so regardful for others!

“Miss Fan,” also, was fond of rowing. But she was just learning and every one was patient with her.

We must needs be patient with our “Miss Fan!” She had a sharp eye for all our weak points. We could not hope to escape her! But how kind she was; how ready to do gentle service for any of us!

Yes, we all loved our “Miss Fan.” We love her still—those of us who are left. Our hearts beat with new gladness when we see her coming—“picking her way,” as Tod used to say of her!—though like ourselves, she

is somewhat older since those dear, foolish days. We know she is loyal yet.

* * * * *

"*Tod*,—did I say? Ah! my pen halts in telling of *him*. There is not just ready the word of description our hearts would fain give him. Our hearts? Yes, I am speaking for all. I know that my comrades of those old days will sustain me!

Don't you know there are some natures so noble, so tender, so finely wrought, that we hesitate to portray them in our feeble words? "*Tod*" was like that! is like that!

The little children love him, nestle to him. Dumb animals love him; they trust him. They know he is their friend.

Certainly! for does not *Tod* (for all that the gray hairs have come) still rejoice in a wonderful canine creature called "*Bobby*"? Did not he seek out *Bobby* with a desire to bring comfort to sad and bereft hearts?

They do comfort one so, these pathetic-eyed creatures, who seem to look at us with such a longing to tell what they feel!

When *Tod* brought *Bobby* home, it seemed to me he knew what he was about!

I may add, just here, that our *Tod* generally *does* know what he is about!

* * * * *

How I wander! Can you feel surprise?—you who spent those fond, far-off, foolish days with me, in the old Home—the Home on the Hill?

Dear old Home!—well named! Home always—until the light (his smile, so fatherly and tender) went out! nay, rather, was obscured for an hour, by dark clouds of

adversity; only to shine again with finer lustre, nearer to Heaven, lower on earth!

Dear, lenient smile! that made all hearts glad; that gave us all such liberty!

Sometimes we used to think that smile said to us, "Oh, you foolish children! what big things life holds for you, of which you know nothing! Yes, I understand! Go on, and be happy—be young, while you may!"

And so we did.

* * * * *

Do you see those long windows, all lighted? and that group gathered about the piano?

It is Sunday evening; and they are singing hymns—choosing, each one in turn.

And they seem never to tire! On and on, the simple melodies flow. No one is left out in that "choosing."

He, in the big armchair, says, "Let us sing No. — for Mother, because 'mother' is among the saints at rest."

She has left the Home on the Hill; but no one forgets her; no one forgets which hymn was her favorite.

And there is a special tenderness in the voices that sing

"Oh, Mother dear, Jerusalem."

No one is forgotten in that service of song. The Thoughtful One has told me that she recalls (the Thoughtful One's memory is proverbially a wonderful memory!)—a time when the dear Mother of that home was living, and at the Sunday evening singing chose a hymn for the first-born son—then a student at a far-away Theological Seminary. She even remembers that special hymn, one popular at the time, "There's a light in the window for thee, brother."

When our dear Thoughtful One "remembers," we all bow our heads, and listen!

* * * * *

"And you taught me that new tune to 'Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed,'" some one says to our Sweet Singer.

"And you taught me Paradise!" he replies, looking at her, with keen eyes full of meaning. Men say such things, at times; and they sound very pretty.

Some one else has "taught him Paradise," since those old days.

"*Paradise*," to our Sweet Tenor, meant—well, it means some one special thing, to each man, and so to him! But never mind! We loved him, just the same. We have, each one of us, our own special weakness; and we want to be loved in spite of it. Do we not?

* * * * *

"Oh, Paradise, Oh, Paradise,
The world is growing old:
Who would not be at rest and free
Where love is never cold?"

Hark! Do you not hear that vibrating tenor, that sweet, tender soprano,—that——

Ah!—the lights are out! the old home is closed. We are out in the cold.

* * * * *

"The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts!"

V.

The Little Housekeeper came to me, with perplexity in her face.

"What can it be?" I said. "Are the two dusky maidens in rebellion? Or is the sun too hot for croquet? Or do they all demand a Picnic, immediately, with no time for preparation?"

"Oh, no." She smiled sadly. "Do you know, I think our Young Clergyman is in love?"

"Well, and why not? Who has a better right?"

"But it worries me!"

"I see it does!"

"He worries me!"

"Oh!—it is you, then?"

"Do be serious! No; he doesn't want *me*!—he wants — But I don't think I will tell you. You would only tease him! and—and—well, I believe it is a serious matter with him, poor fellow!"

"Oh, you are too sympathetic. Any man can look out for himself, in such a case!"

But I knew my rebuff would do no good. She would just go on, warming the heart of that foolish young clergyman with her sympathy! And after all, what would it avail? If he really were in love.

Well, there was not much doubt of that! We soon all began to see it. He was so young, and so desperately in earnest!

After all, have we not each one of us had our turn? Has there not been a time for each one, when all life hung and centred upon that one pivot—Love, love?

* * * * *

Do you know—or do you want to know how it prospered—the Young Churchman's suit? Well, I can tell you this much:—he is married now, and happy, doing his work in the world and in the Church. And it seems to me I have heard it said that he is a grandf—— Sh! sh!—I did not mean to tell you that!

But I think I am right in believing that nothing, nor time nor change,—can ever take from him, nor from us, the glow and the warmth of those old days, when perhaps we could not compass *all* that our hearts desired; yet when, despite all, we were so happy, so full of romance—*so young!*

I think the Englishman will agree with me. I will ask him, when he comes in again.

The Big Boy and the Wise One were so very pronounced in their views of the Young Churchman's love affairs! You see, they, too, were young, and thought they held the "casting vote" in their hands.

We did not mind them! We let them pronounce on this or that, with the vehemence of youth, and smiled at them leniently.

The Thoughtful One said they were right. And Miss Fan agreed! While a voice from the big armchair spoke calm wisdom, and patience with us all—who were *such children!*

* * * * *

After all—oh, ye advocates of "the simple life"—what did it matter, since we could assemble about the dining table at night, and dispose of a fair-sized watermelon?

Our "man John" raised fine melons; and was never better pleased than when we sent him word that we wanted a big watermelon, or several of his muskmelons, for which he had names the most varied.

Oh, yes! we could eat and drink, notwithstanding our romances!

Don't you remember? Certainly, no pleasanter picture comes to my memory than that of the long table, in the lighted dining room, with the youthful faces clustered round it!

What arguments were held about that table! what jokes were perpetrated! and what music of laughter and gay voices sounded there!

What tales that old sideboard could tell! What scenes its polished surface might reveal!

What a picture gallery stands before me!

Do you see it, dear friends?

Do you remember?

"The Celibate," "The Englishman," "The Young Theolog," "The Champion Player," "Sam Patch" (he who once rode on "*jacks*" out West!), "The Wise One," "The Sweet-tempered One," "The Sweet Soprano," with her Little Sister always close at hand; "The Big Boy," and his little sister—ah! it was a goodly array!

And we were all

"So united,
So happily allied."

I wonder, sometimes, if you ever recall those old days—you, now scattered over the world's cold highways; if you remember, as well as I do, the faces about that table—*his* of the big armchair at the head, and the little housekeeper's at the foot; if you remember the jest and the repartee, the music and the games, the free-masonry and the gladness, the happy mornings and the merry nights of the old home on the hill!

VI.

Sometimes I think, if I am ever allowed to enter Heaven, I shall go straight up to one or another there, and say, "Do you remember those days at the old Home, when we sat on the shady piazza, and worked and read aloud? or "Do you remember that rainy day Picnic at the Falls of the river?" or "Do you remember how we used to sing "Rounds'?"

Perhaps they do not "remember," in that Better Land.

But at least here, in this lower sphere, it is one great source of delight!

* * * * *

"Rounds!" How the old halls rang with them, as we sat in the dim twilight!

No lights were ever in demand, in those blessed twilight hours. We loved the semi-darkness. It seemed to bring out the best that was in us. We spoke more freely; our hearts expanded; and kindness and love cast a glow through all the place.

No one ever took undue advantage of it, however. Even our Young Churchman was discreet; though the tones of his voice held a plea—such a plea!—if one girl had only listened.

In the dim light, we could sometimes see the Big Boy's hand in the air, beating time, as we sang

"June, lovely June
Now beautifies the ground;
The notes of the cuckoo," etc.

And surely, had there been a "cuckoo" anywhere in the vicinity, it would have recognized its mates, and come forward!

There was one Round which we all specially favored. It ran:

"Come to dinner!
Come to dinner!
There's the bell," etc.

We sang it at all hours, and in all places, not minding propriety. On the banks of the river, in the woods, or during our long drives.

"Come to dinner!"

Yes; we always knew we might "come"!

Does it seem childish to you? Perhaps it was so. But what would you not give to be that gay child again, looking out upon life with fearless gaze—and with a heart thrilling with glorious purposes, and keen with unworn emotions?

Ah! what would I not give, if I might hear now, as I heard then, the Thoughtful One's happy tone, as she sang with her own peculiar emphasis:

"Come to *din—ner*," or the Wise One's calm, unwavering notes, or our Champion Player's clear, gay tenor?

The old, merry strain is lost! the chords are broken! Some of the dear ones are singing celestial harmonies; and we who are left—well, how can we sing the old songs, missing here and there a familiar voice that we loved so well?

* * * * *

Listen! Is that her, coming down the stairs, singing softly:

"I love its ringing,
For it calls to singing."

And the Big Boy takes up the strain,

"I love its ringing," etc.

Then the Little Housekeeper joins in at just the right turn (she was ever a severe critic of time!):

"The bell doth toll,
Its echoes roll
I love the sound full well."

And if there is any one who misses a note, here or there, our Miss Fan does not hesitate to correct that one. Dear Miss Fan! always so true herself, in every way!

Even when our Sweet Singer volunteered to take his turn at reading aloud—was it not "Bleak House"? Do you remember?—she would catch him up suddenly and sharply, now and then, when he changed the text, or added thereto.

Oh, that reading of "Bleak House"!—what endless fun, what tireless jokes, were founded upon it!

I think the immortal Dickens himself would have smiled indulgently at our nonsense.

And the pathos!—Ah, yes! I myself saw a dimness of tears in the Tenor's eyes, as we read of "Jo"—poor Jo, who "didn't know nothink."

Dear, true-hearted Tenor! May no more bitter tears ever dim his eyes! or, if they do (for none of us can escape, in this sad old world), may loving hands dry them for him always!

* * * * *

Reading aloud reminds me of how, once, some of us coaxed the German to read to us, from Jean Ingelow's poem, "Brothers and a Sermon."

Do you remember the occasion, any of you? Well, some of us were inclined to tease, in those days. However, sermons were much in his line. But we cared more for the accent, then, than we did for the sermon.

We played with edged tools in those days!

VII.

He was "all right, in the morning."

Yes, and so, I think, we all were!

When the old sun shone in at the windows, as the call to prayers summoned us, somehow our hearts took on fresh joy and hope. Each day was, truly, a "new day" to us, and a good day!

The call to prayers? Yes!

Some among us were apt to be tardy in answering to that call—somewhat peremptory.

Why "peremptory?"

Because he of the knowing smile and the gracious word was in the habit of "catching trains," early trains to town. And he had brought up his family to habits of promptness—to have a time for everything, and to mark well that time.

Some of us bless him to this day for that living by system which he taught us. How much it has saved us! how much it has brought to us! that regularity of life, that marking of times and seasons!

Yet he was always tender toward the delinquents.

Can you not see, now, one coming in late, with soft step and modest mien, to the morning prayer service, which she (or he) so loved? And yet—oh, that soft couch, in the morning, was so delicious—so tempting!

We only smiled our forgiveness at the dear delinquent, knowing well that she (or he) was delinquent never, at heart, and in no other way ever tardy in doing the right thing!

Why, I can see now, through all the "jasper wall" of Paradise, the tender smile of our Wise One, as she welcomed the tardy comer! Not a glint of any reproof, not a touch of any superiority in it: only a cordial smile of greeting, bright as the "new day."

Oh, gates of Paradise, open to me, for just a moment, until I can realize that dear presence, so true, so unfaltering for herself, yet so helpful to those who stumbled!

* * * * *

I think that some few of us can yet recall the words of that morning prayer. Such homely, earnest words, which brought us near to the great heart of God!

Do any of you remember that plea for The Dear Father to suit out His "mercies to them and us, as Thou, in thine infinite wisdom, seest we each need?"

Oh, what a resting place! "as Thou seest we need!"

Did not our foolish, weak, young hearts lean upon that strong rock, and leave their uncertainties there?

* * * * *

After prayers, the breakfast bell rang out, clear and positive.

Oh, you scattered ones, do you remember its tone? Would you like, just for one hour, to leave all the bustle and trouble and perplexity of life, and to steal softly into that breakfast room, meeting the glad faces, and joining the merry tongues?

Ah!—you can but remember! And yet remembrance is very sweet to some of us.

Am I overpersuaded in thinking that you—and you—and you remember those sunshiny mornings with tender gladness? that you can recall the lookout from the din-

ing room windows, upon the old croquet ground, and the woods just beyond, fringed with chestnut and dogwood?

Yes! I can see your smile, as you say dreamily—"Dogwood, dogwood? Oh, yes! I think I do remember the dogwood! It grew so gracefully along the edge of the old woods! And its blossoms were so white against the dark trees!"

* * * * *

And what are we going to do to-day?" one or another would ask, glancing from the windows, or reclining lazily in an easy-chair, with an after-breakfast cigar. Were there ever any cigars quite as fragrant as those we smoked in the old home? Easy, cozy old home! where we all did pretty much as we pleased! But we pleased to please.

And so we talked, and questioned, and decided.

And the morning and the evening were another day.

Ah! those happy days!

In *these* days, we do not ask gaily, "What shall we do to-day?"

We rise up, square our shoulders to the appointed burden, and say, "*I must do* thus and so to-day!" "Such and such a duty is awaiting me!"

And we breathe a prayer for grace and strength to acquit ourselves worthily.

* * * * *

Yet we have those sweet, old memories—the morning prayer, and the bright breakfast room!

None can ever take them from us!

They were such simple pleasures; yet, as we look back, nothing seems to have touched us with such a tender radiance. We have been in the depths, and on the

heights: yet how the thought of those old merry days clings to us!

And we bow our tired heads, repeating that old petition:

“As Thou in thine Infinite Wisdom, seest we each need.”

VIII.

"Oh! I can remember farther back than *that!*" says our Thoughtful One, looking over my shoulder, as I write.

"Yes!" agrees Miss Fan. "Don't you remember one who was not young with us, yet who was ever ready to join in our games, to laugh at our jokes, and to be one with us, in all things; who was not young; yet whose hair had not a silver thread when she left the Home?"

Yes, dear comrades. I, too, remember. How long ago it seems! Even the Englishman cannot remember that. I wish he could!

We were such veritable children in those days—those far-off, hazy days. We wrote medleys on popular and interesting topics, setting them to familiar tunes, so that we might all sing them.

I have a vision of three, in the frenzy of poetical effort, collaborating a parody upon "Annie Laurie," bringing in a neighboring bachelor's name, with much discretion and more laughter.

Oh, silly children! whose nonsense was only made tolerable by *her* gentle smile of understanding!

She it was who bequeathed to one among us the sweet knack of verse-making. She was not, perhaps, what the world calls a Poet; but she lived Poetry. And to-day her children—all they of the old Home—rise up to call her blessed!

* * * * *

"Good evening, genteel lady, always genteel; I, a one-horned gentleman, always one-horned, come from this

three-horned lady, always three-horned, to tell you that she has——”

What jargon is this, sounding in my ears, from out that far past?

Jargon, indeed! Did not *she*, our best and loveliest, join in that very game?

Indeed she it was who taught it to us, during those earliest of long twilights, as we sat, dim and happy, in the room where *no lights* were allowed, for as long as decency permitted!

Some folks, I have heard, “love darkness, rather than light; because”—well, never mind!

We loved that fading light because it held such tender joy, such abandon of mirth, such full scope for all that the glorious daylight kept hidden under her dazzling wings!

Dear twilight! We love it yet! for then we can let our tears flow freely,—thinking of those old days; and nobody is the wiser!

But listen! “Good evening, six-horned gentleman—*always* six-horned! I, a genteel lady, always genteel, come to tell you——”

Ah!—a horn for my genteel lady!—for she has blundered in her haste.

Amid the uproar and laughter, a paper horn is fastened in my lady’s tresses, and she becomes a *one-horned lady*,—and so, the ridiculous game goes on.

Ridiculous, did I say?

Perhaps. But I tell you truly, we have placed those horns in the wise young heads (more properly speaking, in the short hair) of theological students, deacons of the church, business men who have since become rich and famous; also among the tresses of dainty girls and women who have since stood in life’s high places, dis-

pending graciously, on every hand, the gifts which ennobled and uplift mankind.

These, I know, when they read this record, will, each and every one, smile tenderly at the sweet old nonsense, so well remembered, and will add their word of testimony to my story of those long-past days. Isn't that so, "Sam Patch?" you of the curly locks, whose "horns" were so difficult to insert!

IX.

"Good morning, seven-horned lady!" called the Sweet Tenor's voice; his happy, morning voice. "All right, in the morning," always!

"Greetings, genteel Tenor, always genteel! It is so much easier to be that than to be striking balls in the dark! Isn't it?"

"Certainly. You are always right, except—— But we won't argue." No; we did not hold our arguments in the morning. He had a peculiar way, this Sweet Singer of ours, who loved an argument, as did some others among us, of ending any such discussion by calling out—"Buttons!" which meant—"No more debating! no more words!" But he usually prefaced his "Buttons!" by a softly spoken "I am right!"—then "Buttons!"

We loved him so well that we were quite willing he should have his own way, and the best of the argument.

Now, don't dispute me, some of you, who remember! When I say "we," I mean those of us who knew his real, intrinsic worth. I wonder if he has found others as pliant as loyal, since those glad, old times?

What arguments we used to hold, in those days! Churchly, and otherwise. One great question, which some of us were fond of discussing, was this: whether a man should marry on "eight hundred a year."

How our Englishman used to laugh, and shake his head, at the very idea!

And certainly, among the females (notably the Easy-going One) there were one or two who stoutly maintained that the thing could be done without a doubt, and *well* done, too!

Romance and common sense held battle in the Young Churchman's heart. "Eight hundred a year—well, he did not know!—and yet—and yet"—with a tender glance at—*some one*—"if two were agreed," etc.

"Certainly!" proclaimed our Big Boy earnestly. "Not a doubt about it! If two are agreed and love each other!" —(a chuckle from our Englishman!)

"Well! isn't love the—the——"

"Fulfilling of the law?" some one mischievously suggests.

"Yes! Love is *everything*!—and if two people really love each other, they can do anything, and live happily on eight hundred a year—*or less*!" This from our Big Boy, who is nothing if not emphatic.

A general uproar of voices and laughter. In the midst of which the Big Boy is to be seen chasing our Wise One around the centre table; and the Tenor is heard to cry "Buttons!"

N. B.: This manœuvre around the centre table (an old-fashioned, comfortably large one) is a veritable fact. I call to testify to the truth of this statement certain of those who were eye-witnesses of the same: *to wit*—our Sweet Singer, the Easy-going One, Miss Fan, and possibly the Little Housekeeper!

Such foolish things were done, in those young days! and—— Why! I had almost forgotten one notable witness of that "physical culture" feat!—our Douglass, the Scotchman! the bonnie young lad, whom we all loved to have among us! He was, indeed, a pleasant companion in our merry mid-summer sports. If I remember

rightly, he, too, has meekly borne a few "*horns*," as the "Genteel Lady, always genteel"—pinned them in his pretty, wavy locks.

"Douglass, Douglass, tender and true!"

Do you think of us, ever, as we think of you?

X.

"The days are too short!" some one says, as the Celibate lights a match, to throw some illumination upon an obscure wicket.

Yes; if we had not such very delightful evenings to follow, we should certainly rebel!

But *what evenings!*

Dear, long-ago friends, comrades, I feel I must thank you for making them so very delightful!

I wish I might see you, at this minute,—every one of you—enter, and pass before me, looking as you looked *then!*

Ah! what a goodly array!

Why, you Little Sister, following ever close behind our dear Soprano, could make a story of it all! You were ever good at spying out our peculiarities and our odd ways! and though you might smile at us, you were never unkind—never, Little Sister!

I think I see you two, leading off my array of long-ago friends: you, who were wont to walk arm in arm up and down the long parlor!

A few, out of all that dear and goodly company, I may, perhaps, miss in passing. But if I do, it will only be because they themselves were so modest in those merry days, that they stood more in the shadow than some of us.

Let me see: There was "Love-by-Name,"—loyal, sincere, ready for every good and helpful work. He has since gone to his reward.

There was, too, "The German;" so modest, then, in the midst of our foolish hilarity—our "negligences and ignorances."

He has, since, taken on great earthly position and honor; and we are glad! he deserves it!

There were those three sisters, who, then and since, have enjoyed everything together. A charming trio, who add grace to my list, and for whom we often longed, in those merry days, when they were such rare visitors.

Their brother, too—a great, manly fellow, whom the world missed all too soon—according to *our* feeble thinking. But we do not now see and know, as we shall, some day!

There was the Grecian Girl, with her charming complexion and her mass of sunny hair.

Ah! and that brave, young Southerner! Can you not see him now, as he marched side by side with the Big Boy, in the Processional, when the corner-stone of the little church was laid?

He has since then, indeed, "marched to victory," as he sang on that day; marched, and entered in, with serene, uplifted face, through peril which swept away so many tokens of his earthly labors!

But God keeps the record; and nothing is ever lost or forgotten.

There was Frank, the "Jolly One" of our company, who had ever a joke or a jest ready, to enliven us. During many a row on the shining river, as he deftly handled the oars, so deftly did he handle the jokes. It is not always given to men to do this. Some of them bungle, terribly, in their jesting. He never did.

But, alas! as the years passed on, he forgot to smile and to joke! Was it that the doors of the old home had closed upon all the mirth and merriment? He was es-

entially a *home-lover*. And I sometimes think that he missed a home. That is always sad for a man. A woman can *make* herself a home anywhere: she has that within her which can build up, and beautify, and consecrate a home in any dull spot of earth! But it is not so with men. They need the warm, bright spot, all adorned and ready for them; its comforts *sure*, its ministering spirit just there, for them to turn to in any hour of need or weariness. Ah! my old comrade, *I know!*

* * * * *

I have just at this moment learned of the death of our old friend.

His cheery voice and the words of his old jokes echo back to me across the years.

I lay my little loving tribute upon his too early grave.

XI.

I am sad—thinking of our merry friend. Why should we ever grow old, and weary, and morose?

Why must perplexity and doubt and loss and disappointment come?

God alone knows! May He give us the patience we need! Yes, friend Frank, we have none of us escaped the shadows; not one of us been exempt, since those old, foolish days of youth!

“Into each life
Some rain must fall!”

Yes,—and a good bit of sunshine, too! Oh, my comrades, let us sit in the light, and pursue our merry jokes as long as we can! It will help others, as well as ourselves.

I remember Frank’s sister. She came among our merry crowd only once—to our great regret! But how bright she was!

Do you recall how she sang to us, that bright morning, full of joy and zest although we had been out late the previous night?

That was—oh, so many years ago! But to-day she, who has passed through hard and shadowed ways, is still the same bright-faced woman, whose interest in life has not once wavered, and who is cheery and helpful to all about her.

He faltered; *she* conquered!

And yet,—and yet,—while we bow our heads before the one who conquered life, do not our hearts yearn over him who “fainted by the way?”

* * * * *

I recall a game which we were wont to play occasionally in those merry, mid-winter evenings; and which sounded like this:

“My father sent me to you, sir!”

“What to do, sir?”

“To work with *one*, as I do!”—or “with *two*” or “*three*,” etc., as the game went on.

I have been thinking that our bright girl friend of long ago has “worked with” every talent which was at her command; and so has made her life symmetrical and fine.

As I recall that foolish old game, how the faces pass before me of those who had a part in it! Laughing, merry faces, they were then, young and careless. How Time’s relentless hand has carved and moulded them since those days of games and pleasures!

Do you remember how emphatic the Big Boy always was in that game?

He has made life very emphatic since then, bringing out its glorious colors, setting forth its grandeur, its nobility, its possibilities, and leading the way by hard paths and through rugged and shadowy roads with his own vigorous tread!

How many others I recall, as I think over those glad old days which we spent together in the home on the hill! How many, who came to gladden our hearts by their stay, for longer or shorter; whose presence there brought happiness to all!

How many! from the dear old Aunty, with her gray

curls, her unfailing "patchwork," and her thorough enjoyment of all our fun, down to the little children, who came and went, bringing in the sunlight with their toddling feet and sweet, lisping words!

We were all of us more or less children in those old days—care-free, and full of confidence in what the Future might bring us.

How understandingly the old Auntie used to smile at our fun and our sentiment! Every one loved her. I think she was an especial favorite with our Tenor. And he, with the rest of us, called her, without rebuke, "Aunt Sally." I think she scented a romance in the air when the Young Churchman would come in, with a sigh, and seat himself in the big armchair, near her, keeping a longing look through the always-open hall door, when a soft footstep sounded upon the stairs.

Ah! the romances! the air was full of them!

And if some of them came to naught, why, we have had the joy, and the sunlight, and the music of it all. And it has not made our hearts hard, nor saddened our thoughts in the least, of those dear, long-past days!

XII.

Speaking of romances, who was that one among us who was wont to sit in the broad window seat, watching—watching—could it be *the sunset*?

“What do you see, Sister Anne?”

“Oh, I thought perhaps he might come on this train!”

“*He!*”—only one *he*, in all the world, for her! Loyal one! Trains, or sunsets,—it mattered not at all! Through all she saw—*only him!*

* * * * *

Do you remember those western windows?—the deep, low seats? How often we have sat there, chatting, gossiping, looking forward to a Future as bright as the sunset which we loved so well!

I think I can see her now, with some pretty work as an excuse, taking a stray stitch now and then, and ever looking—looking—for that manly form, which *to her* embodied every quality the heart of a woman could desire!

Poor women! What deluded creatures they are! How they dress up some one man or another, with the fine fabric of their love, and stand near by, to gaze and admire—*not him*—not the man he is—but the ideal they have created in their tender hearts: oftentimes not the man who *loves them*, but the man whom *they love!*

Poor, foolish, trusting women!

But we love them, for all their folly!

* * * * *

The Thoughtful One was another sunset-lover. Unlike, oh, quite unlike our tender, romantic watcher, "Sister Anne," she was *not* also a lover of *sunrise*! No beauty of that early kind ever appealed to her! She wanted the world well warmed and in order, before she rose up to look upon it!

As for Sister Anne, *she* could face gray dawn and chilly eastern skies with a smiling, expectant face; and declaim, afterward, to us delinquents, upon the beauties which we had missed!

Dear Sister Anne! She is now in That Wondrous Land, where "the sun goes not down," and where there is "no night!"

Would you miss your loved sunsets There, my Thoughtful One?

Nay, I think not; for nothing is ever "missed" There!

So enjoy your evening skies here, dear friend; and let us enjoy them with you, while we may!

"There are more of us There than here," wrote our Big Boy the other day.

Ah! can it be possible? More There than here? Yet they seem so near!

And while I sit writing of those foolish old days, of their games, their nonsense, their romances, what do *they* think of me? those loved ones There?

Do I need to ask pardon of those dear hearts, whose dwelling is in That Far, Pure Land?

Nay, rather, I think I can see the smiles upon their serene faces, as I make record of all those merry days and doings; those sweet romances, which perchance came to naught—and perchance will last into Eternity!

No, there is neither scorning nor shame upon those dear faces, as I think upon them. But the Light from

their Blest Abiding Place reaches me faintly, as I sit here, pen in hand; and I bow my head, praying that it may touch you all, who are yet in the mists here below, waiting for the Word to be spoken, that you, too, may pass over!

XIII.

What a practical man our Celibate was!

It was well, perhaps, that there came, now and then, one of a practical turn amongst us.

For we were surely a sentimental company! We are not ashamed to own it—even at this late day—are we, my friends?

Did not the Little Sister have her budding romances, even then? And our Soprano was an epitome of sweet sentiment.

The Easy-Going One was overflowing with rare thoughts of devotion and tenderness.

The Young Churchman—ah!—well, you all know how *he* wore his heart on his sleeve! Dear fellow! Never mind! He has done well, and stands—next to the Bishopric, now!

One doesn't like to be called *sentimental*. But we were! all the same. The strange part of it all, as we look backward to those sunny days—and forward to the practical, real Present—is this, of which we make honest record: The Celibate has married! The Young Churchman has turned the page upon his romance, and smiles at life, as it keeps him to-day, at his steady, practical, common duties! The Easy-going One and the Big Boy neither of them live on "eight hundred a year!" Our Sweet Soprano and her Little Sister are each calmly content and happy with their *uncompleted romances*! And the Little Housekeeper declares that the joy of life consists in sitting down to read a good book, and letting some one else plan the dinner!

Alas, what falls have these all had!

* * * * *

We were not overmuch troubled about "dinners" in those days. But we *did*, sometimes, stake our all upon a Picnic!

How we watched the clouds! How we buttered ham sandwiches, with an eye upon the western sky! That is to say, we buttered with our *hands*, while our eager eyes scanned the western heavens, to see what prospect they held for our projected trip to the banks of the river or to the Falls!

Even "John, the man," was called in consultation. Poor John! Once, he was overpersuaded. He saw how much we *wanted* it to be bright; and he decided for us that it would clear.

And *it did not! It poured* all day!

He never recovered from the shock! Ever afterward, when a picnic was planned, or a ride, if his opinion were desired as to the state of the weather, John would look meek and say "*I* advised yees once! I'll niver advise yees again!"

Faithful John! May all advisers be as true and as honest!

* * * * *

Yes, we had picnics. They were jolly affairs. They made us hungry! How we used to eat!

Why, I remember once, when one of us (honor forbids me to say which one!) had eaten heartily of various good things, that one turning to her comrades, demanded, "What shall I take next?" Whereupon some one replied, "Take a rest!"

* * * * *

There is a certain free-masonry in picnics. At least, there was in *our* picnics! But then, there never were any other picnics quite like unto *ours*! At least we thought so, then; and I do not believe we have found cause to change our opinion since!

Do you remember how an old-fashioned volume of "blue-and-gold" used to find a place among the eatables in the hamper? (*Shelley*—or *Shelley not?*" our Thoughtful One used to put it.) Puns were so easily made,—and so readily received, in those youthful days!

Do you remember that tall fellow, who used to delight in dropping stones down one of the crevices between great rocks, and listening as they struck far below?

He has, since then, been dropping words into the depths of human souls, to try to reach some sounding spot, whence the echo may rise to Eternity!

Do you remember how the sunset haze crept over all the fair landscape, and how the "blue and gold" were melted and lost in the first faint shades of the coming night, ere we were ready to leave our happy picnic grounds, and to start on the homeward drive?

Alas! and alas! It was all so long, long ago!

XIV.

We loved the long summer days best, at the old Home. Yet we have had some rare happiness when the winter snows were white all around.

Do you remember, comrades, the New Year's Eve, when we went to the little Church, at midnight, to usher in the New Year?

We climbed up into the belfry, and watches were drawn forth, to note the last minute of the Old Year.

Then—Ah! the hand that pulled that bell rope, to ring the New Year in, has lain restful many a day—taken from our grasp, and from the doing of all kindly deeds!

But *we do not forget!*

As soon as the strokes were completed, which numbered the year, Love-By-Name reverently lifted his hat, leading in that mark of recognition of The Giver of the Old Year and the New, and we sang:

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”

Can you not see him now? I can! He was not given to any outward show. He was very self-contained, and that is why we so appreciated that little act of reverence, leading many of us, who, while *professing* more, were certainly more giddy and thoughtless. At least, I speak for myself! And I drop, like a flower upon his grave, this small token of loyal friendship to his memory, who left us many years ago. How few we find like him, among the young men of to-day. He was so correct, so

true, so wise, so gentle! really *a gentleman*; and what higher praise can we give?

Very often that scene in the dim belfry comes back to my memory. And how plainly before me arise the faces of those who stood there in the light of the lanterns!

Notably our dear "Prima Donna," with her eager, English way, and her enthusiasm for all that was good and seemly.

Ah, how true she is yet, to the little Church, which has also seen many changes!

He who serves now, at the altar, is *not* our Young Churchman of the dear old days. Yet *she* is there, still, in her pew at the services, regularly, and full of plans for help! We are shamed—some of us, when we think of it!

Three, out of the half dozen or more who stood in the belfry that New Year's Eve, have "gone up higher." We are left—to remember! remember!

* * * * *

Those were early days, at the little Church. She was, like ourselves, young. And every one was ready with plans for helping her grow and thrive.

I recall the tall form of the Quaker City gentleman, with his earnest wife, and three daughters, who counted nothing too hard, so it was done *for the Church!*

And their dear boy! *one only*, yet unspoiled, who was ready for every good work!

Ah! we do not see families, whole families, working like that for love of the Church, in these days! It is as rare as it is beautiful.

* * * * *

Speaking of the church in the woods, I wonder, my comrades, if you remember *the Doctor?*

In truth, it would be hard to forget him, as we recall those good, old days!

He was a modest little man: never thrust himself. But oh! when he came, somehow, things were straightened out and pleasant. One needed not to be "a patient," to gain his kindly word of attention. Oh, no! As a friend, he was—perfect! Why, of course!—you all know that! *Don't you remember?* My Englishman will testify to the truth of what I say.

Our Young Churchman knows it well.

And many and many another "lesser light" will be glad to place a tribute of affection upon that little spot of earth where rests all that was mortal of our dear Doctor!

Many, many still live, to bless him for his tender skill as a physician!

Can't you see him, as he walked up the aisle of the little Church, carrying the plate, at the Offertory?"

He loved the services of the little Church.

And we loved him!

* * * * *

Dear little Church! How many sweet associations cluster about it!

May God bless and prosper it, till it is joined with "The Church Triumphant," within the walls of the New Jerusalem!

XV.

"Why! you are growing sad," some one cries.

Well, and if so? Who can look backward, without a tinge of sadness falling across his vision? Who so happy, that he has escaped loss or defeat or disappointment? Come, my comrades, answer!

Is it not enough to make one sad? to find *change—change*—written along all the way—from the dear days of fun and care-free play, on to the prosaic present?

But hark! dear comrades. We are not to mourn; since such a dear Past stands ever smiling at us, when we choose to turn back the pages!

"Onward" may be the cry of some eager hearts; but *for me*, it is ever *Backward!* When the pulse is low, and the shadows fall, and friends seem few and far away, *backward*, to the days when youth's heartbeats rang joyously, and the sunlight glow was upon everything, and friends were close and true!

What fairest Present can ever touch us with such a tender, lingering grasp?

What? Do I want more "picnics," more sails on the river, more Monday holidays—with no young clergyman to consecrate them—more games and "Rounds" and songs sentimental, "in night's still calm?"

Yes! I think so. And *you?*

Can you not see the smile slowly dawning upon the Champion Player's face, as he thinks of it?

Do you not hear the Englishman's quiet chuckle as he contemplates it?

See the Young Clergyman's grave face brighten as he wonders "how it would feel" to stand on that wide green lawn again, and hear the *click—click* of the mallets,—and in between, the soft notes of the robins calling to their mates!

"Sam Patch"—dear old comrade! *You* would be glad, I know, to fold back the years, and be a boy again, among those merry hearts, those loyal ones, who are true to you still, for all that you have found the world's highway a difficult road. May the lights from that old home shine out, and reach you yet, making the way clear and straight!

And "the girls!" We always called them girls: it was our freedom time of youth, you see; and the old home was—such a home to us all! I think I see them lift their matronly faces, as I wonder if they would like to go back to those old days—those dear, foolish days of picnics and of sails, of songs and of romance; those careless, merry days, when we ate and laughed—and laughed and ate again!

The Little Housekeeper has told me of a queer episode, which seemed to result from one of our "picnics." In fact, we all heard of it, in the morning. But, as our Sweet Tenor used to say, we were "all right in the morning;" and so the recital only brought laughter and mirth.

I tell the tale as 'twas told to me!

We had all retired early, weary with pleasure. In the wee small hours, a cry from Miss Fan roused the Little Housekeeper, who went to the rescue.

"What is it?" she asked.

"We are all—*sick!*" replied a weak voice that resembled our Miss Fan's.

She who was always so ready with a reason for every

happening had nothing to offer, on this occasion! It was an unheard of calamity!

Well, the Little Housekeeper brought remedies, and sat herself down to be sympathetic.

Miss Fan, casting about for some solution to the mystery, weakly remarked, "What can it be? *We didn't eat anything!*"

Which, to those present, who knew how much and what variety of food had been disposed of, was a strange remark! But they were probably not in a state of mind or body to induce argument.

I am told that quiet reigned—until presently a weak laugh was heard from the pillow of the Thoughtful One.

"She says we did not *eat* anything!" was her explanation.

And as the little group of the sick and the sympathetic took in the enormity of that statement, well—"there was a sound of revelry by night!"

Hadn't eaten anything, indeed! Who knew about that, better than the small housekeeper herself? She may have cast a reproachful glance upon her friend, Miss Fan: I do not know.

But I do know that we were not usually delinquent in that way; and that whatever may have been the cause of the midnight calamity—we were at least blameless on that score!

Hadn't eaten anything! Oh, Miss Fan!

XVI.

But, like our dear Tenor, we were "all right in the morning."

Trouble never lasted over night, in those blissful days. At least, *ours* did not!

I dare not say as much for the poor Young Churchman!

The Little Housekeeper has confided to me some pages in his history of those days, which go to show that his trouble *did* sometimes stay with him through the night, and into the sunny morning hours.

But ah!—he was young, and youth conquers all things—even love!

Look at him, now, to see it proven! Portly, practical, philosophical—and—grandfatherly! Why, our Young Churchman, we scarcely recognize you! But we are glad for you (and for her) that the problem of life is solved, and that each of you fills so well the place which God designed for you—and you alone!

How often we try,—in our blind, human, sentimental way—to usurp the Father's place, and plan and carve our own future! We always fail, or, worse, drag some one else down with our presumption.

Let us be content (it is easier now that we have left impetuous youth so far behind us!) and stand humbly aside, while our wise Father plans for us!

What say you, our Thoughtful One? Am I not right? I am sure you will uphold me in this. You are

—you always were—a stronger Christian than I—stronger in every way.

* * * * *

Often, when I think of those old days, and of the Young Churchman and his love affair, which so engrossed all our young hearts, I recall how one wise comrade, who came among us occasionally, used to say of our Young Churchman, “There is *good blood* there. Good blood always tells!”

And he was right. I am convinced now of that. Our Young Churchman could trace back his ancestry, oh, to those early days, when

“Tre—Pol and Pen
Were among the upper ten!”

Our dear companion, who is now in that Paradise to which he so often helped to lead others, was much given to favoring good old blood; and was particularly interested in family trees, whose branches twined and spread and grew with such precision that one could trace back to the earliest little twig where the sap ran—“blue.”

Ah me! Well, the Young Churchman wears his dignities now like a true-blooded gentleman.

And are we not glad, my comrades, that we used sometimes, in those merry days, to greet him with smiles of sympathy, to encourage him, and perhaps carry him off for a game of croquet; letting the birds and the breezes and the soft sunshine whisper to him of hope and of Love’s young dream?

We all gained much good from those sweet Nature comforters. Not that we owed to needing much in the way of comfort in our buoyant youth and inexperience!

Still, the soft, helpful beauty crept into our souls unconsciously; and there we found it, in later days, when the stress and press of life had worn upon us, and the far-off shadows began to edge surely—surely—toward our sunshine.

After all, dear comrades, what would our sunshine be, without its shadow to set it off? We at least have learned so much, since we played croquet together!

Possibly some other lessons have been learned by some of us.

We have grown meek, perhaps, and are willing to be taught. At least, I recall one whom the Celibate used to try to persuade to think and calculate, before she struck her ball. But his calm, calculating style did not suit her at all! And do any of you remember how, once, in flouting his very deliberate "Now, wait, Miss"—Impulse, she struck her foot instead of the ball?

She has hurt herself many times since, by driving the ball too hastily!

But the Celibate has held the even tenor of his way!

She smiles sometimes at him. But she *knows* he is right!

XVII.

Did we ever have rainy days? Yes, indeed! Long, blessed days of rain; while, inside the Home, the sun shone on; and we could read aloud and work and talk, to our heart's content!

Do you remember the long room at the top of the house, where we set up our Rainy-day Croquet?

I can see our Champion Player's rare smile, now, as he took his mallet in hand, to do valorous things on the smooth floor!

Do you remember the Artist among us, and how she made a picture of our indoor croquet ground?

I verily believe that the picture could be found now—a little sketch, tucked away in some far corner of the Champion Player's desk! He had a corner in his heart,—a far corner—where sentiment was securely hidden away from all curious eyes! But we—*some of us*—knew well that it was there! Some good men are that way. Why is it? Do they think sentiment too sacred a thing to be expressed and shown openly? Perhaps. But some of us think it better to let our light shine in this cold, practical old world of ours, that so, perchance, some chilled hearts may be warmed by its glow.

I remember how our Big Boy (who was nothing, if not openly sentimental) used to be really vexed at the Champion because, by his cold, indifferent manner, he so often hid a truly tender emotion.

Perhaps, in these late days, when the gray hairs mingle with the black, our Champion may occasionally take

out that little sketch, and smile, thinking of those long gone, merry times.

The Artist, oh, where is she? In the mother country, doing faithful duty, as the wife of a clergyman (not our Young Churchman).

Does she ever recall those happy old days, I wonder?

* * * * *

And yet another: she the Fearless One—who once had the courage to dance with our Young Churchman!

How we wondered at her audacity! and how he enjoyed it! and how truly graceful they both were! She so *petite*, he so tall and dignified.

Well, she has had many gay dances, in her young life, and though she has since walked some weary steps, she has not lost her old zest for pleasure, nor her bright sympathy for youth and its joys.

What a dear, good fellow *he* was, who walked by her side for so many happy years!

He was the ready helper for each one of us, watching for opportunities to do a kindness. But *to her* he was ever the loyal, devoted, tender husband!

How he could laugh! And a laugh is a very excellent index to character. Ah! that old, care-free, foolish laughter!

Perhaps it might seem strange, now, even silly, to see a half dozen or more of ordinarily sensible people, convulsed with laughter; and laughter which had no special cause or excuse, either!—just the outlet of a pure jollity.

Could we laugh so, now? with all this jar and fret of life that has struck across the music of our souls?

How it would *rest* us, if we could! How it would cheer our hearts!

Dear cousin, comrade, friend, do they *laugh*, in That Far Land where you have gone?

* * * * *

The fragrance of the flowers comes back to me, through the long years, the flowers in the garden, which were plucked daily, to brighten the home.

It breathes about me, like a soft voice, whispering—whispering of those old days!

How the vines grew and clambered over the piazza, carrying their beauty and their sweetness up to the windows above, where we breathed it, last at night, and first in the morning.

The tendrils seem clinging softly about me, as I write and remember.

The vines, and the moonlight, and the soft breezes, and the steps upon the lawn, and the robins' good night song, so simple, so sweet!

* * * * *

Have I anything more to say?

Why, comrades, I could talk on forever!

Do you see how the dogwood strikes out pale and distinct, along the edge of the dark woods?

How the moon looks down upon it all, with tender glances, beautifying, and covering defects?

Perhaps, so will you look upon these jottings of mine, you comrades of long ago; your loyalty casting a glow over all that is poor and weak; your smiles brightening that which might otherwise be dull and commonplace.

* * * * *

Was it around that corner by the old barn—the barn with the saucy, brazen rooster upon its cupola—that Miss Fan and another comrade went hand in hand, one night, after a row on the river?

How the dark and silent trees bent their branches low, as they passed beneath, as if assuring them of their fealty and support!

It was the Sweet Singer, I think, whom they were eluding; and who went softly into the house later, with a puzzled look upon his usually serene face.

He entered the lighted parlor, glanced round at the company, and asked a question or two, half revealing, half concealing his discomfiture.

They went strolling in, one after another, the merriment in their faces and the river air among their tresses. What a glow and gladness youth can take from such simple joys!

The Scotchman was there, that evening. Do you remember? And how he enjoyed our nonsense and our hilarity!

He had not left his own romance so very far behind, and he sympathized with us keenly. He carried in his breast pocket pictures of his wife and two bonnie boys! Does not that tell the story?—a blessed story, which the hard old world does not hear often enough!

He was one of those rare, quiet men, whom every one loved and honored. We meet such men, now and then, in our busy, hurrying life—men who seem to give us the keynote to all that is noble and elevating. Just to be in the presence of such men helps all mankind.

We have lost all trace of our good Scotchman.

Time makes such changes, we scarcely dare to turn and look, lest a dear familiar one has vanished from our ken.

* * * * *

That was the summer in which Tod and the Thoughtful One were in Europe.

A long beautiful summer. Yet we missed them sadly!

* * * * *

Some one among us used to play the concertina. Do you remember?

Do you see the sunlight flickering through the trees, touching his tall figure?

We had a good deal of music in those old days, of one kind and another. Do the strains ever come floating back to you in these present times, when, perhaps, we have attained a higher degree of cultivation, but when indeed our hearts often long for the familiar melodies of long ago?

Listen! Can you not hear those clear, vibrating tones?

“Oh, fair Dove!

Oh, fond Dove!

Oh, Dove, with the white, white breast.”

Why! I have seen that very sheet of music somewhere, quite lately; and I know that it is very dearly prized because of a certain inscription on the top right-hand corner!

These mute mementoes of happy bygone days, how some of us cherish them! Has anything in life touched us with a more tender grace than those youthful, merry hours?

“Dear, *dead* days!” our Thoughtful One calls them. I wonder if he ever sings now.

“The dove on the mast,

As we sailed fast,

Did mourn and mourn and mourn.”

* * * * *

It grows late. The moon is sailing serenely on high. Was it by that path (oh, you old, old moon, *you* can tell!) that we walked from the little church, and—well, never mind. We will not tell, old moon. But *we* know; you and I!

“How life repeats itself!” he said!

Does it? At least there never has come to us any repetition of those glad, care-free days.

The years are fast passing. The golden gates of youth have closed to us, my old comrades. We can never return to those moonlit paths! never stand again in that radiant sunshine!—never enter more the doors of the dear old home on the hill!

But no time nor age nor change nor sorrow can take from us the sweet memory of those long-ago days!

“In night’s still calm” it will return and speak to us; and when we are “all right in the morning,” we shall feel its soft touch upon our hearts.

We shall breathe again the old fragrance, and hear the old, familiar voices; and in our souls the old songs will sing themselves with a tender cadence.

* * * * *

And for a last word to you all, my comrades who abide still in this strange old world of mingled shadow and sunlight, what can I offer better than that one petition from the old prayer, which you and I have heard so many times, and risen from our knees with glad faces and joyous expectant hearts.

“Suit out Thy mercies, oh Lord, to them and us, as Thou, in Thine Infinite Wisdom, seest we each need.”

Do you remember?

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